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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000973

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/I, NEA/I, EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2013

TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS FR IZ

SUBJECT: FRANCE DECLINES INVITATION TO ATTEND FRIENDS OF
IRAQ CONFERENCE IN ABU DHABI

REF: STATE 50592 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Andrew Young for rea
sons 1.4. (b), (d).

¶1. (U) We passed a copy of the invitation in reftel to French MFA desk officer Olivier Masseret on May 16. Masseret on May 20 informed us that FM Kouchner's private office had decided, as it had last October, that France would decline the invitation (the original of which, Masseret noted, had not made its way from the French national representative to CENTCOM to the MFA) to attend the upcoming MNF-I conference. He emphasized, much as the MFA had in October, that France's decision did not reflect disinterest in the subjects to be discussed but in the appearance of association, even as an observer, with the MNF-I coalition.

¶2. (C) Comment: As reported previously, while we judge the French refusal even to risk the appearance of association with the MNF-I coalition as unlikely to change, we believe the French are willing to continue the engagement with us on political-military issues started when FM Kouchner met with SecDef Gates. We strongly recommend a joint State/DoD team, headed by S/I Satterfield on the State side and an appropriate DoD counterpart, continue the dialogue S/I Satterfield started in late December 2007. A useful starting point for such a discussion would be the Department's reply to the French response to our late December paper on things we thought the French could do in Iraq.

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